

Fast start helps Tigers to SWC volleyball win over Warriors

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
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GRANITE CITY – Edwardsville's boys' volleyball team got off to a quick start against Granite City in a Southwestern Conference match at Granite City's Memorial Gym Annex Thursday evening, the Tigers' opening the match with a 9-1 run that set the tone in a 25-10, 25-14 sweep of the Warriors. Edwardsville went to 15-9 on the season with the win, 6-2 in the SWC while GCHS fell to 8-9 overall, 4-3 in the league.

The Tiger win was simply a matter of execution, felt EHS coach Andy Bersett. “They put the ball in play – we had to go out and execute,” Bersett said. “I thought we did a pretty good job; all around, I thought the energy was good, we moved well on the court, I thought we talked well. We didn't play perfect – I thought our free-ball passing was kind of weak, but other than that, I thought Lucas (Verdun) had a pretty good game and the guys worked hard.

“I'm happy with that performance overall.”

Getting out to the 9-1 lead at the start set the tone, Bersett felt. “It helps,” Bersett said. “We're just not putting the ball in play, we're serving tough – give credit to Max Sellers, he went back there and had a whole bunch of serves. That's not an easy ball for our guys to pass in practice and I know that's not an easy ball for the (the Warriors) to pass either.

“That has to do with Max executing a tough serve; he wasn't just lobbing it in – that's a tough ball.”

Fifteen aces on serve also played a big role in the win; it's been a focus of Bersett for the Tigers as of late. “That's been one of our focuses,” Bersett said. “We got halfway through the season and we realized that other teams were just putting the ball in play and having too many options, so we have to go back there and serve tough.

“It's not something we're trying to turn on and turn off; every situation we're in, whether it's practice, we'll live with a few errors if those errors are going to be aggressive – when they're in, it pays off.”

Once EHS got off to their opening 9-1 run, they never really looked back; the closest the Warriors could get was at 9-5 and 15-8 midway through the opening game, with an ace closing out the opener. Game 2 opened a bit more even, with the score at one point being 4-3 in the Tigers' favor, but then Edwardsville got on a run and got the lead to 10-6, with the Warriors pulling to 10-7 before the Tigers expanded the lead to as much as 17-8 before Granite pulled to 20-11 in the late going. Edwardsville then scored the final points of the match on a streak for the win.

Sellers, a sophomore for EHS, had four of the Tigers' 15 aces on the night go with six points from serve and 10 digs; Eric Epenesa and Cal Werths each had four kills while Evan Billiter and Josh Whittenberg added four aces of their own and Verdun 16 assists on the evening.

The Tigers next meet up with Vianney on the road at 5 p.m. Monday before returning home for a 5:45 p.m. league match against Alton Tuesday; the Warriors host Ritenour for a 5:30 p.m. Monday match before going to Belleville East for a 5:30 p.m. Tuesday match.

